

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3307

April 19, 2007

COMMITTEES:  
ARMED SERVICES  
BANKING, HOUSING, AND  
URBAN AFFAIRS  
SMALL BUSINESS AND  
ENTREPRENEURSHIP  
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

The Honorable Donald Winter  
Secretary of the Navy  
1000 Navy Pentagon  
Washington, D.C. 20350-1000

Dear Secretary Winter:

I appreciate the extensive discussions that we and our staffs have had over the last several weeks regarding the Navy's proposal for an outlying landing field in North Carolina.

As I have conveyed to you, the Navy's proposal to build an OLF in Washington County is simply not feasible. In the best interests of both North Carolinians and the service, the Navy must withdraw its recommendation for an OLF in Washington County, and focus on operationally viable sites in North Carolina where environmental and other problems are very limited, and where residents are more receptive to such a facility and its potential for long-term economic development. I will oppose funding for an OLF in Washington County, as well as other potential sites that fail to meet these standards. In addition to reassessing sites included in the Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement, the Navy should also consider the possibility of suitable locations on state-owned land.

As you are aware, I share many of the concerns expressed by thousands of North Carolinians, dozens of conservation, agricultural, civic and other citizen groups, as well as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Tens of thousands of waterfowl spend much of the year adjacent to the Washington County site at the Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, and I have serious doubts about the effectiveness and soundness of methods that the Navy has said it might use to mitigate this environmental and safety risk. My misgivings about the wildlife presence are reinforced by the March 19, 2007 testimony of the director of U.S. Fish and Wildlife, who identified a number of adverse effects that could result from an OLF located in close proximity to the refuge. Additionally, the public hearings in eastern North Carolina and in Charlotte have underscored that thousands of residents in our historically military-friendly state are opposed to the placement of an OLF at a number of the proposed sites, and undeniably the most adamant and vociferous opposition is to a Washington County OLF.

I accept the Navy's need for an OLF that will not diminish in training value due to encroachment. North Carolina is strongly pro-military, and our state welcomes the expansion of the military's presence and its accompanying economic benefits. I look forward to continuing to work with the Navy – and facilitating a dialogue with state and local officials and my colleagues in the North Carolina congressional delegation – to find a solution as quickly and efficiently as possible that will both benefit residents of North Carolina and provide pilots with the training that they require and deserve.

Sincerely,

